

Issue 72

Dec 2013

SHCG news

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SOCIAL HISTORY CURATORS GROUP

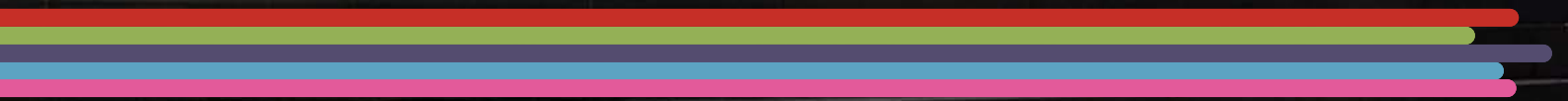


Back to the Land

Destination Tyneside

Illustrated Envelopes

SHCG Conference Reviews



Join SHCG?

If you're reading this and you're not a member of SHCG but would like to join please contact:

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Write an article for SHCG News?

You can write an article for the *News* on any subject that you feel would be interesting to the museum community. Project write ups, book reviews, object studies, papers given and so on. We welcome a wide variety of articles relating to social history and museums.

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE:
25 April 2014

SHCG NEWS will encourage and publish a wide range of views from those connected with history and museums. The *News* aims to act as a channel for the exchange of information and opinions about current practice and theory in museums.

The views expressed in the *News* are wide ranging and do not necessarily express the views of the SHCG committee or SHCG, unless otherwise stated.

The suggested word count for submissions is: Bulletin Board 100-300 words, Theory & Practice 900-1,000 words, Reviews and Object Focus 400-500 words (one page) or 900-1,000 words (two pages), Tea Break 300 words. Please submit your article by e-mail, saved as a Word file (Arial 12 point). Images can be e-mailed or, if high resolution, submitted on a CD (high resolution preferred). Images should be accompanied by a brief caption and credit details.

Alternative formats:
Electronic copies and alternative formats are available on request.

Send all contributions to:

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Front Cover: The Ulster Museum, Belfast, venue for day one of the 2013 SHCG Annual Conference, pp.15-18.

Image courtesy of National Museums Northern Ireland.



Welcome to Issue 72

I've been receiving some interesting e-mails at work of late. In November Danny Savino of the 'Parcel Recovery Unit, Accounting Section', informed me he'd been instructed by the International Monetary Fund to release my "entitlement". He even sent a photo of the vault where my vast entitlement was, he assured me, "packaged for delivery". All I needed to do was supply my full name, address and phone number, and a "diplomat" would attend to my case!

I thought: how fortuitous that I am about to come into a fortune, I can now help all those "poor, sick, orphans, victims of war and natural disaster" that Mrs Nesma Mohammed implored me to assist in her heartfelt e-mail of the previous month. God will surely bless me for my generous benefaction, assured Mrs Mohammed.

In September 'Mandy' very kindly e-mailed me on behalf of the Tianjin Jiumu Industrial Co. Ltd. because she'd heard that I was "on the market for ferrous and non-ferrous metals". This was news to me, but who am I to contradict Mandy? I'll be sure to keep her details on file though.

On 29 August a representative of the Hong Kong Guotai Yunnan Economic and Technological Investment Co. Ltd. wrote, "Our company needs to buy some different kinds of woodiness swing. If your company can supply the woodiness swing to us, pls send the pictures and specifications". I don't know about you, dear reader, but we're simply coming down with woodiness swings here at Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, and will be most glad to export them to our new friends in Hong Kong.

All this got me thinking about spam e-mails, and whether anyone has been collecting and archiving them as a representation of this aspect of late twentieth and early twenty-first century life. With the help of the Digital Preservation Coalition, I posed my question to some of the world's leading authorities on e-mail preservation.

Dr Tim Powell at The National Archives thought a spam archive could be an illuminating resource for study, as he pointed out: "one can trace global trends and conflicts through the content of spam emails (thus following the American occupation of Baghdad one received fewer offers from widows of African dictators and more from bank employees in Iraq)".

Kevin Ashley, Director of the Digital Curation Centre, responded: "There are a number of individuals and organisations that have been collecting spam e-mails for some time, although their motives are very different to yours.

"The main reason spam is collected is to train spam recognition algorithms. The biggest commercial operators will do this on a huge scale, but won't make their archives public. They also probably won't retain them indefinitely as the training value of 10-year-old spam is relatively low. But others do make collections available, partly so that different recognition algorithms can be compared against a known set of material.

"Other collections have been made by individuals, on a whim or in a more scientific way. All of these and more could be analysed from the point of view of the social historian, but that isn't why people collected them in the first place."

So, it would seem that spam e-mails are actively collected, but mainly to create training resources with a limited shelf life, rather than with a view to building up an historical archive of this ever-present yet highly ephemeral aspect of modern life. How will historians of the future interpret spam if we haven't collated and preserved the source material?

Adam G. Bell

Editor, *SHCG News*

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SHCG Matters

New constitution adopted

Following the membership ballot for a new constitution earlier this year, we're pleased to announce the following confirmation from Electoral Reform Services, who were commissioned to conduct the ballot:

Number of votes cast: 107

Turnout: 28.5%

Number of votes found to be invalid (blank): 1

Total number of valid votes to be counted: 106

Result

Number voting YES: 102 (96.2% of the valid vote)

Number voting NO: 4 (3.8% of the valid vote)

TOTAL: 106 (100% of the valid vote)

The new constitution was therefore adopted at AGM in Belfast this summer and SHCG will now proceed with an application to the Charities Commission for CIO status, from which point the committee will be acting as trustees for SHCG.

Jenny Brown

SHCG Committee
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firstBASE *Tools for the Trade*

firstBASE, SHCG's online database of helpful resources, was recently awarded a grant from Arts Council England (ACE) for our *Tools for the Trade* project. Many social history collections contain tools used in local industries but today they can be increasingly baffling to the modern curator. If you would struggle to distinguish a caulking mallet from an adze, don't worry, help is at hand! The aim of the project is to create a series of short films in which specialists, either curators or practitioners, are interviewed about a tool or group of tools.

The tools featured will relate to a trade such as coopering or shoe making, and the specialists will impart their knowledge about how to identify, date and use these tools. We also hope to include practical demonstrations so that the tools can be seen in action.

In contrast with some of the films available on sites such as YouTube, *Tools for the Trade* films will have the SHCG seal of approval and viewers can rely on them being both historically accurate and of a high quality. At the end of the project the films will be uploaded onto firstBASE so that all SHCG members can benefit from them.

SHCG has appointed Sarah Hayes as Project Coordinator and Luke Unsworth as film maker for this project. Both have experience of making films with and for social history museums as well as other cultural organisations, so the project is in safe hands. If you think you could contribute to the project, either as a specialist or as a museum which has a suitable collection of tools, do get in touch with Sarah at seh383@hotmail.com.

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SHCG e-mail list

The SHCG e-mail list has been buzzing recently with several pleas for help with mystery objects. As ever, list members have rushed to the aid of puzzled curators, with suggestions of threshing machines, tools for making holes in cigars, cherry stoners, and curling tong heaters. We've also had some great events marketed and new jobs advertised through the list, showing the breadth of work being done in museums up and down the country. My favourite e-mail of the last few months though has to be the one asking if anyone had any mannequin arms going spare!

E-mails sent via the list are archived online – a handy searchable resource stretching back to the list's beginnings in 2005. To check whether a topic has already been covered, you can do so here: www.jiscmail.ac.uk/SHCG-LIST

If you're a member of SHCG and haven't yet joined the e-mail list, get involved by sending an e-mail to shcg-list-request@jiscmail.ac.uk



Leather workers' clamps, 'mystery objects' successfully identified by list members Kitty Ross, Christine Stevens, George Monger and Vicki Slade.

Connect with SHCG

In addition to the e-mail list, we also publicise our events and activities via our website and social media accounts, so please feel free to visit www.shcg.org.uk, follow us on Twitter @SHCG1 and like us on Facebook (search for "social history curators group").



Catherine Newley

SHCG Committee
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Keeping Up Appearances

The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry has delved into its extensive costume collection and selected some stunning

pieces for a new exhibition, *Keeping Up Appearances: Fashion though two world wars*. The exhibition explores the links



Image courtesy of The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum

between women's clothing and women's history from 1900 to the 1950s. It features costume, accessories and social history objects from the Herbert's collection, supplemented by loans from Walsall Museum Service and Warwickshire Museum Service.

Women's lives and their status in society changed dramatically during these 60 years and *Keeping Up Appearances* explores how these changes are reflected in fashion and clothing. The exhibition is arranged chronologically in six sections and charts the shifting roles of women: from running the household in Edwardian corsets and dresses, to working through two world wars in uniforms and Utility overalls. The interpretation has a strong social history emphasis and is complemented throughout by period photographs, which bring the focus back to the ordinary women who wore these fashions. Where possible, local stories from Coventry have been highlighted.

Visitor numbers have been consistently strong since the launch and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. For many, the displays have acted as a stimulus for reminiscence about their own lives and clothing, or those of relatives, during the period. Complaints have been minor, centring on the low height of label stands and the small size of some photographs, but we were able to react quickly by producing a folder of larger size labels and panels. The next time we present a similar exhibition, we would also consider including a vinyl timeline or footprints, which could help to emphasise the chronology and enable visitors to orientate themselves more easily.

Keeping Up Appearances runs at the Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry until 5 January 2014, and will then be available as a touring exhibition.

Leah Mellors

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Winners of the Collections Trust Awards 2013 for excellence in collections management celebrate their success on the terrace at the Kia Oval.
Image courtesy of Amanda Clay

Collections Trust awards

Three prestigious awards for excellence in collections management were awarded at the OpenCulture 2013 conference at the Kia Oval on 2 July. From a high-quality long list the winners of the Collections Trust Awards 2013 were:

Collections Practice Award: Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery.

Participatory Practice Award: Beaney House of Art & Knowledge.

Collections on a Budget Award: East Grinstead Museum.

The winning entry from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum & Art Gallery focused on its review of collections, which marked "the most important year in RAMM's history since it opened in 1868". The judges said: "Isn't this how all museums should work" and "A really inspiring project".

The Beaney House of Art and Knowledge's nomination was for *The Paper Apothecary*, a life-size and fully-functioning apothecary shop created by Animate Arts Company and made entirely out of paper and card. The judges said: "Well thought out, beautifully designed, and a flash of the future" and "High in immediate and demonstrable impact and innovative in its approach".

East Grinstead Museum's entry was titled *Digital Preservation Made Easy* and it aimed to make digital copies of all images in the museum's collection available for visitors to view and enjoy. The judges said: "A great project that will make a lasting difference to this small but well-run museum" and "The way volunteers have been managed and rewarded is very impressive".

Detailed nominations and background information about the Collections Trust Awards are available on the Collections Link website at www.collectionslink.org.uk/ct-awards
The CT Awards 2013 long list was:

Collections Practice Award: Edinburgh Libraries and Information; Lanhydrock House (National Trust); and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum.

Participatory Practice Award: Luton Culture; Glasgow Museums; Beaney House of Art & Knowledge; and Orleans House.

Collections on a Budget Award: The Royal Fusiliers Museum; East Grinstead Museum; and Preston Park Museum.

John Woolley

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Photographic encounters

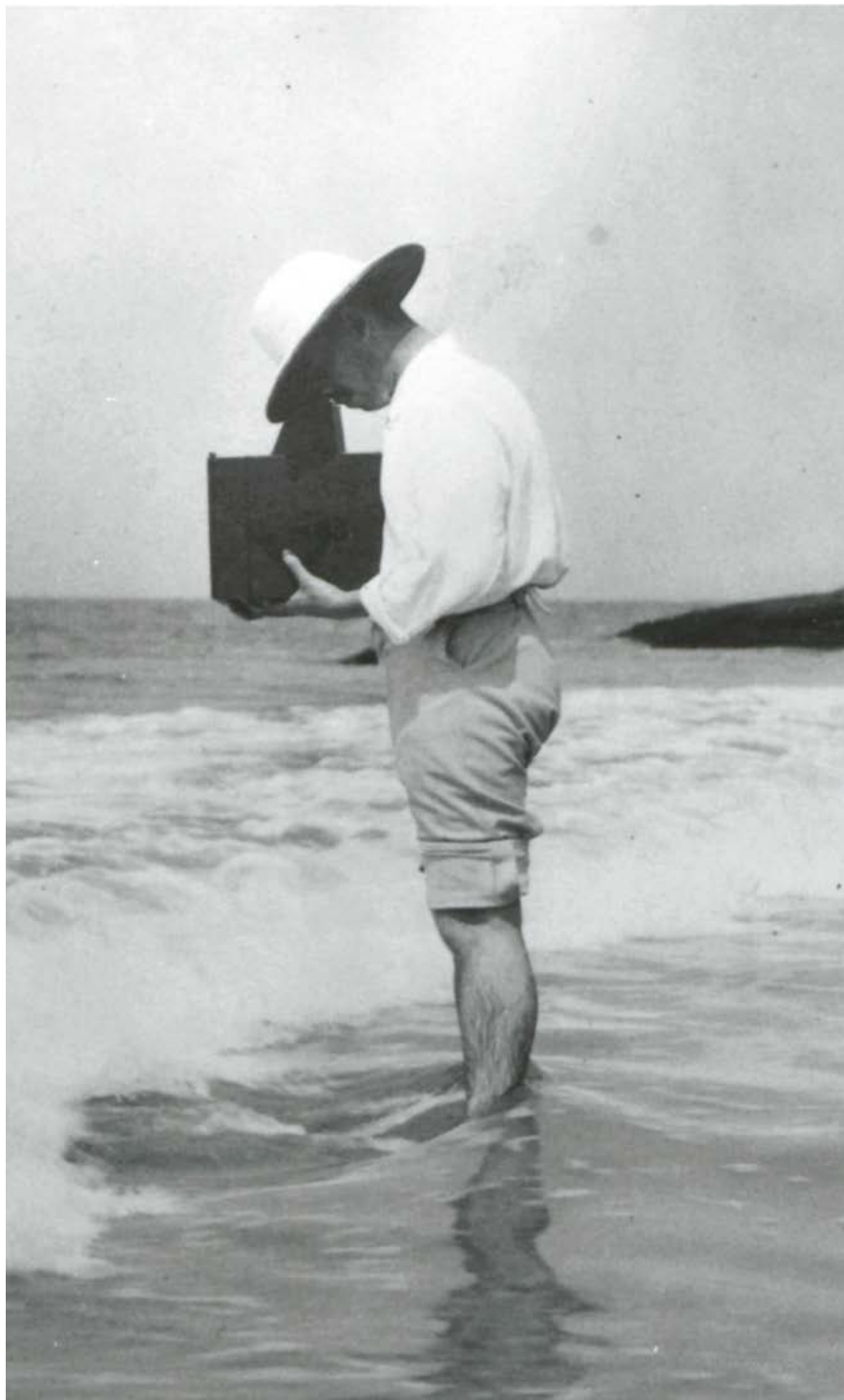
The Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive (REMLA) tells the story of Britain's military engineers from the Roman period to the modern Corps of Royal Engineers. The largest military museum in Kent, REMLA also holds the county's only Designated Collection of historical and international importance. In October a new photography exhibition opened at the Museum, aiming to show a different and intimate side of the collection.

Encounters: Photograph albums and their stories presents previously unseen photographs and photo albums, dating back to the 1850s, which have been chosen from a collection of over 600 photograph albums at REMLA. Supported using public funding by Arts Council England, the exhibition explores the narratives that are told through photograph albums, scrapbooks and their intriguing mixture of private photography and commercial prints and postcards.

The photograph albums also offer the opportunity to discuss varying colonial relations as seen through pictures. This aspect is central to REMLA's photography collection, which largely exists due to the expansion of the British Empire. Royal Engineers were active all over the globe, using photography as a key documenting tool. Unhindered by challenging climates, many Royal Engineers were inspired to develop new photographic methods – one of the most well-known figures being Sir William de Wiveleslie Abney.

Following on from the exhibition (on show until 30 May 2014), the Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive is also working hard to launch its online collections catalogue. This will make over 2,000 photographs accessible, as well as a substantial part of the Museum's wider collection.

www.re-museum.co.uk/collections



Ulrike Bessel

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Maj. Gen. C.H. Foulkes in the West Indies, about 1904.

Image courtesy of Royal Engineers Museum, Library and Archive

Collections skills seminars

A series of free Collections Skills seminars for small and medium-sized museums are to be presented in Norwich, Bristol and York by Collections Trust, with Arts Council England support.

These new events will address key collections management topics, and provide essential updates and advice. Delegates will receive comprehensive support materials to take away, and the seminars will be of special value for Accredited museums or those working towards Accreditation.

The seminars will take place at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery on 29 January 2014, M Shed, Bristol on 19 February 2014, and the National Railway Museum,

York on 19 March 2014. Online registration is now available for all these events at www.collectionslink.org.uk/skills-seminars.

The aim is to enable museum staff to refresh their knowledge on key collections management topics and to learn from sector experts. The programme includes sessions on 'Using Museum Standards to Sustain Collections' by Alex Dawson, Programme Manager for Standards, Collections Trust, and 'Building Digital Capacity in Museums' by Nick Poole, Chief Executive, Collections Trust. An Arts Council England speaker will provide an update at each seminar.

Sessions will include practical exercises and facilitated discussions. Delegates will

receive supporting materials and be able to access further information on Collections Link. As well as improving their knowledge, they will learn how to obtain vital support to help them in their work, share issues, concerns and learning, and network with colleagues and sector experts.

More information, including the programme, speaker profiles and venue information for the free seminars is available on Collections Link.

John Woolley

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Military memorabilia at one of Belfast's hidden gems

While exploring Belfast prior to this year's SHCG Conference, I happened upon one of the city's lesser-known cultural attractions. Tucked away just off Waring Street is the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum. Having only intended to spend 20 minutes or so looking round, I left after an hour and a half, having discovered the complete history of the Regiment thanks to a meticulous personal tour given by a gallery guide who had served with the RUR.

The museum was established by the Army Museums Ogilby Trust (AMOT), a charitable organisation that seeks to inspire and educate the public in military history. With an impressive collection of medals, badges, uniforms, weaponry and regimental memorabilia, the museum covers



The Royal Ulster Rifles Museum - Image courtesy of RURM

the history of the RUR and its campaigns, dating back to 1793. Traditional military music accompanies the objects, text and images and there is a facility that invites visitors to trace their army ancestors and military genealogy. Although equipped with old-style display cases and interpretation, I for one think the place would lose its character if it were to be given a makeover.

With the First World War centenary and the seventieth anniversary of the D-Day Landings fast approaching, this couldn't be a more important time for military museums. The collections offer valuable insights into Northern Ireland's

involvement in major conflicts, but they also highlight the personal connections between the regiment and its local community. While documenting the military history of the Ulster region, the stories told at the Royal Ulster Rifles Museum are as relevant locally as they are globally. Open four days a week, the RUR Museum has a total workforce of seven, including four volunteers, and is funded solely by private donations. The AMOT is assisting the curatorial staff in all areas of development.

Jack Ord

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Heritage funding directory

The Heritage Funding Directory, which includes 278 funding sources and dozens of specialist advice, training and education bodies has been refurbished and re-launched. Set up in 2007 and now sponsored by the Country Houses Foundation, it breaks down grants, loans and other potential benefactors by specialism - such as historic landscapes, transport and maritime sites - and lists bodies that offer training, advice and education as well as other 'in kind' services. Many more financial awards recognising and celebrating heritage protection have been added (there are now over 50), from organisations as diverse as the Costume Society and the Worshipful Company of Coachmakers.

www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/fundingdirectory/main/fundinghome.php

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Shunga: sex and pleasure in Japanese art

"With most images so far they've both been involved in something. He's 'getting some' and she's 'getting some'" - Male focus group participant

The British Museum's current exhibition, which carries an advisory statement, is the first major show dedicated to what is arguably a unique phenomenon. In Japan between 1600 and 1900 thousands of sexually explicit paintings, prints, and illustrated books were produced, known as shunga ('spring pictures'). Shunga was produced by some of Japan's most celebrated artists -



Lovers in an upstairs room, Kitagawa Utamaro, 1788.
Image © Trustees of the British Museum

including Hokusai, best known for *The Great Wave* - but has rarely been exhibited because of its unapologetic celebration of sex.

During the twentieth century shunga became taboo and all but disappeared in Japan. The current exhibition is one of the outcomes of a five year collaborative research project which has aimed to further understanding of a neglected subject. Arranged in five sections, the exhibition looks at shunga's origins, its masterpieces, function and decline as Japan opened up to the West and the modern world.

The reaction of potential visitors to the sexually explicit nature of the art was explored through formative evaluation. The five focus groups that took place were some of the most interesting that have taken place at the Museum. Across all of the sessions, participants viewed shunga as art rather than pornography. This consultation gave the project team reassurance that the public were comfortable with shunga and that the exhibition's broad approach was correct.

One of the most influential aspects of the evaluation was the discussion of humour in shunga, something that was initially considered would be helpful in putting visitors at ease. In fact, the mutuality of pleasure

in shunga generated the greatest debate, and this conclusion influenced the nuancing of the approach, the exhibition title and the marketing campaign. Summative evaluation of the exhibition is currently underway.

Shunga: sex and pleasure in Japanese art runs until 5 January 2014.

Stuart Frost

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New museum security resource

The new Security Resources section of the Collections Link website is now live. Its content has been extensively reviewed and updated to provide a unique, comprehensive, and practical collection of resources. It is available at www.collectionslink.org.uk/security

The enhanced resource contains new guidance on auditing security measures, and introduces the concept of the Environmental Visual Assessment. This supports the informal assessment of security measures, and integrates responsibility for security across the entire organisation.

Supporting the Assessment is a more specialised Security Audit, which includes a detailed checklist of possible security measures in a museum, and prompts users to check and record their findings. In addition, the Museums Security Toolkit illustrates how to tackle the security of collections using a four-step risk management approach.

Supporting this core content is a series of Security in Museums and Galleries guides, which explore security measures such as implementing CCTV, securing buildings and perimeters, and maintaining key security. A number of Security Specifications provide information about specific security measures such as grilles, doors, windows, glass and frames.

One highlight of the enhanced resources is a series of Case Studies, which includes a number of audio/PowerPoint presentations. They illustrate practical ways to improve and share knowledge about security for collections, both within museums and by using sector networks.

This comprehensive resource provides museums of all sizes with free information and essential guidance about how to improve security and better protect their collections.

John Woolley

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Prison museums

In 2013 the think tank Policy Exchange published what it called “a radical plan to reform the prison estate”. At the heart of this report was a plan to close more than 30 old prisons and replace them with 10-12 new ‘Hub Prisons’. This report attracted national media coverage in the light of coalition government policy supporting the closure of older and, it is

asserted, more expensive prisons. The closure of the older prison estate has been policy for the last two years, with a total of 11 prison closures announced this year alone. Outside of the explicitly political debates, the closure of these older and, in many cases historically significant buildings, has brought prison history to the fore.

Closures may in some cases present opportunities to develop prison museums. Development of closed prisons into museums can also ensure historically important buildings have a viable and sustainable future by giving them a revenue stream to cover, or at least contribute to, maintenance and repair costs. In Britain we already have many good examples of how historic prisons can be exhibited to the public. There can be few more impressive and emotive spaces in which to encourage the visiting public to reflect on the ways in which society has classified, managed, punished and in some cases abused those who offended against the law and standards of morality in the past.

In August of this year I was fortunate enough to visit Beaumaris Gaol on the island of Anglesey. This was in order to write an article on the prison for the *BBC History Magazine* (November 2013 issue). The management of the Gaol kindly



Lincoln Prison.
Image courtesy of the Lincoln Castle Revealed Project

allowed me access to the prison on a day when it was closed to the public. This was a rare privilege I very much appreciated, and I was particularly struck by the firm divide which can be achieved by architecture. Beaumaris Gaol is in excellent condition with many of its original features still intact, including examples of in-cell sanitation, communication bells and, uniquely, a treadmill, still in its original location.

This set me to thinking about uniqueness, or at least rarity of original features in these old prisons, an aspect of them I would certainly like to know more about. These are assets to promote understanding about how punishment was imposed, conveyed and experienced. The original and globally unique ‘separate system’ chapel at Lincoln Castle Prison provides a thinking space about the religiosity of the separate system more powerfully than any text could do. Potentially, an equally powerful message could be given by a working treadmill, if that could be achieved at Beaumaris.

During the First World War, Lancaster Castle and the prison there was used as a prisoner of war camp for German Officers, and part of the impressive Pentonville style wing added to Ruthin Prison in 1866 was used as a munitions factory during World War Two. Bodmin Gaol claims the only working execution pit in Britain, discovered during renovations in 2005. Fascinating though these and other aspects of prison exhibitions in Britain are, they are located within broader disciplinary systems, penal policies and social and cultural contexts which are inextricable to understanding not only the value of the institutional histories offered by these exhibitions but the particular demands made by unique and rare items upon our reflections and efforts to understand the past.

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Back to the Land

Engaging with rural collections

For six days in September 2013 artist Jo Roberts became the 'Temporary Keeper for the Repatriation of Rural Artefacts' at Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum (LSAG&M). She selected 11 rural artefacts from the museum collection, which she then took 'back to the land'.

The project was devised to complement an exhibition about local rural life, called *This Green and Pleasant Land*, on show at LSAG&M from 19 October 2013 to 12 January 2014. The aims of the project were: 1) to (re)connect rural artefacts in the collection with local rural sites, and 2) to develop a new and exciting way to engage audiences with collections.

The decision was made early on to work with an artist who would bring a fresh and exciting perspective to the interpretation of the rural artefacts. LSAG&M had worked with Jo in 2007 on an exhibition called *Finding a Way Through*, which explored the links between the river Leam and the creative journey of the artist. Jo's work often encourages people to

view the world around them in a new way, which fitted in well with our aims. She was commissioned to work on the project in January 2013.

Jo's proposal was to select a number of artefacts and take them back to where they came from, or places that they had a connection to, in order to make real the links between the artefacts in the collection at LSAG&M, which is located in the centre of Royal Leamington Spa, and the surrounding rural area. At each location a speaker with expert knowledge would lead a tour and facilitate discussions about the object and topics pertinent to it.

I was used to taking objects out of the museum for outreach sessions and talks. However, in these instances they were taken from the stores to classrooms or village halls; Jo was proposing that we take them to fields and allotments! We assessed the potential risks to the objects and weighed these against the likely benefits. The decision was made to go ahead.



At Crackley Woods the objects were displayed in a car boot.

Image courtesy of LSAG&M



On the last day we took a beer bottle and costerel to a field in Offchurch, a village about three miles from Royal Leamington Spa. We finished at a micro-brewery to bring the story of beer up to date.

Image courtesy of LSAG&M



Artist Jo Roberts at Stoneleigh Abbey preparing certificates she made for the participants.

Image courtesy of LSAG&M

Jo selected 11 artefacts to 'repatriate' from a shortlist that I put together. These ranged from a delicate silk bookmark to a vicious-looking badger trap. She then researched the artefacts to draw out any common links. Six distinct themes emerged, with one or two objects connected to each. These were: the impact of industrialisation on rural life; the importance of hedgerows and natural barriers; farming in the twentieth century; buying local and sustainability; growing your own; and the changing role of beer.

We considered having one talk a week over the course of six weeks, but ultimately decided that

an intense programme of one talk per day over the course of a week would be more effective. We also thought that this would be most appealing to our target audience of retired and semi-retired people.

The task was then to find suitable speakers and venues for each talk. This proved to be the most difficult and time consuming aspect of the project. The issues revolved around the fact that we had 12 separate elements (six speakers and six venues) to determine and then allocate to convenient slots in the week. Although Jo and I divided the task between us, it took three months to finalise the programme.

The venues were a mixture of private and public places, none of which we knew very well. Three weeks before the talks began Jo and I carried out a 'recce' of the six venues. We made notes about parking; assessed access; decided on the best way to display the objects; and noted whether there were toilets nearby. Five of the six venues were open-air and so we also identified sheltered areas as a contingency for rainy days. This information formed the basis of the itinerary that was sent to participants one week before the programme started. As participants were expected to meet us at the venues we also included directions.

The first talk took place at Stoneleigh Abbey, a large country house about five miles from Royal Leamington Spa. The 'repatriated' object was a mid nineteenth century bookmark from an industrial exhibition, which was a starting point for discussions about the impact of industrialisation on rural life. Over the course of the week the talks, each featuring different artefacts, took us to a wood, a working farm, a community farm, allotments, and a field/micro-brewery.

In order to facilitate high levels of engagement with the artefacts we limited places on the tours to ten. This gave the participants the time and opportunity to probe the artefacts and the stories attached to them. One participant



commented that it was easier to view the artefacts when some of the "museum barriers" had been removed. The evaluation shows that understanding about the artefacts was improved by presenting them in settings where they would have been used. For example, the speaker at the allotments demonstrated how he would use the bean dibber that we had taken along.

The small number of participants also encouraged interaction with the speaker, which generated discussions. A participant at the first event noted that what they would remember most was the "discussion and rapport between speakers and attendees". Many of the participants booked on to more than one event and by the end of the week there was a core group of regulars, which engendered a light and friendly atmosphere.

The evidence in the evaluation forms and comments from participants suggests that the Back to the Land programme was extremely successful in achieving the aims of the project. Although the events were very time intensive to organise, this was offset by the high level of engagement the participants experienced. Now that the format has been established, I'm keen to carry out similar events in the future. Following the events, one participant wrote a series of folk songs inspired by the talks. He will perform these on the closing day of the *This Green and Pleasant Land* exhibition.

Vicki Slade

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Left: This bookmark was the most fragile artefact that was 'repatriated'.

Image courtesy of LSAG&M

Destination Tyneside Developing a new migration gallery at Discovery Museum

In July 2013 a new permanent gallery about migration, *Destination Tyneside*, opened at Newcastle's Discovery Museum. Research conducted by Durham University in 2010 found that people who recently arrived on Tyneside felt distanced from the region's identity, due to their exclusion from museum displays. Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' (TWAM) commitment to community engagement and to social justice was a key factor in the determination that Discovery should do more to reflect the different histories of Tyneside and its people.

The project team set out five aims for the new gallery:

To engage in an informed way with contemporary migration by promoting an historical perspective.

To encourage people to debate migration and identity.

To promote tolerance, alter perceptions on immigration and contribute to social cohesion by increasing understanding of the migrant experience.

To undertake an enabling role to show how the North East can respond to and benefit from migration.

To show that Tyneside's history and identity is not fixed or immutable, and that we have always been an open society.

By including this part of our history within Discovery Museum we hoped to send out a strong signal about life in the North East; to foster a sense of belonging and, by presenting an historical perspective on migration, to promote tolerance.

Tyneside's pivotal role in Britain's rapid industrial growth of the



Meeting historic characters in their homeland.

Image courtesy of TWAM

'The aim of juxtaposing the stories of past and present migrants is not only to allow for comparisons but also to demonstrate that migration is anything but a new phenomenon'

nineteenth and twentieth centuries is well documented. What is less well known is that by 1911 one third of the population were migrants or children of migrants, particularly from Ireland and Scotland. As such, the crucial period from 1840 to 1920 was chosen as a springboard to examine the role of migration in Tyneside in the past as well as today. Historian David Renton has written that "The North East was a boom area, a British counterpart to the California of the Gold Rush". With such numbers moving to the area there was an opportunity to create a dramatic immigration meta-narrative composed of various distinct individual stories.

The story of migration continues to be a complex and challenging one on Tyneside. According to the Institute for Public Planning and Research, in the decade leading up to 2001 the North East, relative to other areas in the UK, saw the

second biggest rate of change in migration – 41 per cent more people who were born abroad made the region their home than in the previous decade.

Contesting perceived notions of a well established history was challenging. Renton has pointed out that since 1945 the North East has been spoken about falsely by the press and politicians, as if the population of the past were static and unchanging. We aimed to disrupt this notion of stability in a constructive way that would enable people to see that, in the words of Doreen Masey, “identity is always in the process of formation, it is forever unachieved”.

A Stonewall report in 2003 titled ‘Profiles of Prejudice’ concluded that 25 per cent of those questioned from the North East expressed negative feelings towards Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people. This necessitated a different interpretative approach than that seen in countries such as America, where migrants are often portrayed as industrious and entrepreneurial rather than disenfranchised victims.



The 180 degree cinema space - Image courtesy of TWAM

Visitors to *Destination Tyneside* follow six real life historic characters through dramatised AV projections, charting their decision to leave their homeland, though the migration journey to their new life on Tyneside. The stories were chosen to represent the largest, and most significant, immigrant groups from the years 1840 to 1920. It is hoped that this technique will engender an immediate and emotional connection to the subject.

Among the stories featured on the AV is that of Lena, who moved to Tyneside to escape the persecution of Jewish people in Russia. She arrived with her husband Lewis in 1874, aged 17. Also featured is Thomas, who moved to Jarrow from Ireland in 1874 with his wife Maria and their son Patrick. He, like many fellow Irishmen, gained employment in the town's chemical works. Angela tells the story of how she moved to Tyneside from Italy in 1904 with her husband Antonio and their daughter. They started an ice cream business in Newcastle which continues to this day. Another story highlighted is that of Ali, who arrived in South Shields in around 1898 after getting work on a merchant ship from Yemen. He became the first Yemeni boarding house owner in the town.

The project team also worked with seven people who had moved to Tyneside since the 1960s, capturing their stories of moving here. Again these participants were chosen to represent key immigrant groups, including migrants from India, Pakistan and China in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, a Polish migrant who moved after 2005, an international student studying in a local university and a Zimbabwean who was granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK.



Irish tea draw displayed in *Destination Tyneside*. Image courtesy of TWAM

The aim of juxtaposing the stories of past and present migrants is not only to allow for comparisons but also to demonstrate that migration is anything but a new phenomenon. Robert Winder in his book *Bloody Foreigners* aimed to show that by understanding the benefits of migration our "national pride can feel less clenched, less besieged".

Destination Tyneside depicts migration as a process rather than an event, i.e. looking at a longer period than the physical journey of migration. Joachim Baur in *Commemorating Immigration in the Immigrant Society* argues that "by illustrating general and enduring issues of immigration through these stories and by encouraging the visitors to make connections to today the museum makes it possible to implicitly and even explicitly discuss current immigration through its exhibitions".

'The North East was a boom area, a British counterpart to the California of the Gold Rush'

Visitors to *Destination Tyneside* can trace the geographical spread of their surname on touch screen tables, finding out where people of their surname were most commonly found in Britain in 1881 compared to 1998. This reinforces historian Dr Marlou Schrover's quote, which is featured in the gallery, that "Few people in the world need to go back further than three generations in their family tree to stumble upon a migrating ancestor". Tracing their surname encourages even those visitors who may consider themselves 'Geordies' through-and-through to rethink their personal history.

Since its opening on 12 July 2013 Durham University have carried out evaluation of the gallery, assessing if it has had an impact on attitudes towards migration and/or the demographic of visitors coming to the museum. Findings revealed that a third of visitors to the gallery between 12 July and 31 July were visiting the museum for the first time, 85 per cent of whom had come especially to see *Destination Tyneside*, 50 per cent of whom were non-white/British. Many comments from visitors demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding, and referenced changes in attitudes towards migrants and migration. All people who contributed their stories to the gallery felt their involvement in the gallery had been an overwhelmingly positive experience.

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Mr and Mrs Asghar's story features in *Destination Tyneside*.
Image courtesy of TWAM

Local Stories, Global Identities

SHCG Annual Conference, Belfast 27-28 June 2013

Review Part I

As a first-time delegate to conference, and on my first trip to Northern Ireland, I was very much looking forward to the SHCG conference and some time to explore Belfast. A warm summer's evening and dinner at Café Connor with several other delegates the night before day one made for a fun and relaxing lead in to our short stay in the city. This was a great opportunity to get to know other SHCG members, and it was instantly apparent how friendly and welcoming everyone was.

Traditional Northern Irish weather greeted us on the morning of the first day, and after a communal breakfast spent discussing the day ahead (as well as reminiscing about our past experiences of university halls of residence!) we did not have far to travel to our prestigious venue for day one, the Ulster Museum. A warm welcome by the conference organisers, Ciara Canning and Jude Holland, awaited us. The outgoing SHCG Chair, Michael Terwey, and our convener for day one, Adam Bell, briefly introduced the day before the presentations commenced.

Georgina Young began with a very interesting talk on the Museum of London Docklands' (MoLD) development of a new narrative in the museum that aims to balance global histories with stories of local people and the impact on the local area. Young highlighted that while the museum primarily serves the East End of London, 20 per cent of visitors to MoLD are from overseas. MoLD therefore is attempting to achieve that balance of local and global,

but there is a tension that exists between the two, influenced by how visitors respond. For example, the *Rights of Man* gallery explores slavery, quoting statements such as "London is my city. Jamaica is my country. African is my history". This makes us realise that the way we think about space and place is changing. The notion that we are tied to where we live and work perhaps no longer exists.

The second talk of the morning came from Catherine Littlejohns who spoke about M Shed's *Revealing Stories* exhibition and the success of co-curation between the museum and Outstories, an LGBT community group who also worked with local schools and Bristol Record Office. Littlejohns' presentation considered how we define the term co-curation, why and how museums are entering into creative ways of working with their local communities, and caused the conference to think about how museums can make the results relevant to, and reach new audiences.

I found Littlejohns' talk particularly engaging as much of it resonated with my own experience of co-curating an exhibition for Leeds Museums and Galleries as part of the Cultural Olympiad *Stories of the World* project in 2012. I identified with the collaborative process of working with young people and a range of diverse community groups. The democratic way of working, such as the clear roles identified in producing and editing text and deciding on what content to include, also resonated with me. Littlejohns emphasised the positive experiences shared by all those involved in the *Revealing Stories* exhibition and stressed that people's attitudes towards the LGBT community have changed as a result of such an ambitious co-curation project. It has clearly strengthened the museum's relationship with the LGBT community and widened participation, but they have also considered carefully what could have been done differently and improved upon.



Delegates enjoy a visit to the Thompson Graving Dock, Belfast, where Titanic was fitted out.

Images courtesy of Adam Bell



The third talk of the day was given by William Blair of National Museums Northern Ireland, who presented 'Connecting History: Exploring new methods of interpretation at the Ulster Museum'. Blair explained that the overall goals of the project were to enhance the interpretation and the experience of the museum for visitors. Dividing the gallery into interpretive zones, each one titled, invited visitors to think carefully about the content and the stories being told. Creative media and layers of interpretation enabled this process.

During Blair's presentation, we were invited to consider what the essential criteria are for a successful history exhibit which, he argued, should include power and place of narrative, the human interest, and the context in which to 'unpack' the story. I liked Blair's comparison of exhibition curation to the production of a film and the similarity of the selection process. For directors it is the decision over which scenes to include in a film, for curators it is selecting material for display in a gallery. I think this caused the conference to reflect on the priorities for individuals and museums in telling a story, and to remember that these change over time.

The afternoon's lively debate, entitled: 'This conference believes local history has had its day' certainly brought some strong views to the fore, and many of the delegates contributed to the discussion. One opinion suggested that an overview of recent news including conflict in Syria, the G8 summit and the horsemeat scandal was a stark reminder of the reality of globalisation and migration, therefore concluding that local history has had its day. The counter argument considered that museums wouldn't exist without the intimate personal stories and oral histories of local people and communities which people across the globe can relate to. One view was that local history simply **is** global history! It was clear that both sides put forward intelligent views on the idea, and the debate provoked strong reaction giving



Image courtesy of Adam Bell

Left: Zelda Baveystock arguing that 'local history has had its day'.

Below: Exhibits in the *Ulster Crisis: Irish Home Rule and the Ulster Covenant* exhibition at the Ulster Museum.



Image courtesy of NMNI

everyone much to ponder. In the end, conference delegates concluded that local history has not had its day.

Later in the afternoon, there was a chance to find out more about Belfast's industrial history in the form of a walking tour of the Titanic Dock and Pump House. At 850 feet long, it was the largest dry dock in the world when built, which is difficult to envisage until you're actually stood in it! We were fortunate to have an enthusiastic and energetic guide who was very knowledgeable, making for a fascinating tour. I hadn't appreciated beforehand the dreadful conditions suffered by those who built Titanic, and the grief that the whole city experienced when the news came that the ship had sunk on her maiden voyage. We were reminded that, "Titanic was

alright when she left Belfast", a testament to the city's pride in building her.

The SHCG conference rounded off a very enjoyable day with a delicious meal at The Apartment restaurant, which gave the opportunity for delegates to relax, and reflect on the day. For some, the night was still young, returning to our accommodation for the traditional SHCG gin party! And so, to day two...

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Review Part II

For day two of the SHCG conference, delegates were bussed from Belfast's city centre to Cultra, the location of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum (UFTM). The UFTM is an open air museum that recreates the look and feel of nineteenth century Ulster through a combination of exhibit buildings, costumed staff and traditional craft demonstrations. The huge site (around 170 acres) not only comprises 'town' and 'rural' areas, but also boasts an indoor transport gallery that features the superb *TITANICa* exhibition.

It was in the 'Parochial Hall' building of the UFTM's town section that delegates gathered for the day's talks. The hall itself is one of the only non-original buildings on site, being a recreation of one that was erected over a hundred years ago and thirty miles away from Cultra, in the town of Portaferry. It was a slightly unusual venue for a conference, but trying something new can often lead to good things – a point highlighted by Brian Walsh, Curator of County Museum Dundalk, who introduced the first talk of the day with a quote from George Bernard Shaw:

You see things; and you say "Why?" But I dream things that never were; and I say "Why not?"

In his talk 'Walking Forwards, Looking Backwards', Brian explained how he and his team were inspired by the spirit of Shaw's "Why not?" to undertake a series of projects that experimented with new technologies in order "to put local history on a global platform".

This led to the creation of a dedicated website to accompany a temporary exhibition held at the museum about arctic explorer Sir Francis McClintock, also known as "the arctic fox". This use of the web was a first for the museum and proved to be both a very useful education resource and a great record of the exhibition

'the Migration Museum would be the first of its kind in the UK. It would also be unique in that the museum would travel around the country in mobile shipping containers'

itself. It's a testament to the website's simple and clear layout that despite being designed over six years ago, it still looks fresh. You can find out more at www.arcticfoxtrail.com

Another successful project was a series of live radio webcasts. The series of six webcasts focused on the history of local industries in Dundalk and were designed as an education resource, to be listened to in the classroom. However, in keeping with the local-meets-global theme of this year's conference, these webcasts were not only listened to by children in nearby schools, but also by children across the Atlantic, in the town of Dundalk, Maryland USA. It transpired that Dundalk's American namesake was originally founded in 1856 by Henry McShane, a native of County Louth. The webcasts were thus able to connect students across the globe in finding out more about their shared history.

One project that did not sound as successful was the development of a 'Hidden History of Louth' app for iPhone. The app was mainly aimed at tourists visiting the Louth area, rather than visitors to the museum, and was designed to give users more information about various historic sites around the area. Despite being available for free, there have so far been few downloads. This is possibly due to a lack of promotion from the local tourist board, but also to flaky WiFi connections/phone coverage in the area – a fatal flaw for an

app designed for outdoor use.

The next talk of the day moved us on from County Louth in Ireland to Bedfordshire, England, and to the newly refurbished Higgins Art Gallery & Museum. As demonstrated by Lydia Saul, Keeper of Social History at the Higgins, Bedford is a town that has never been short of interesting characters. For instance, did you know that Surrealist artist Dora Carrington, anti-apartheid campaigner Trevor Huddleston, and former Olympian Harold Abrahams all hail from Bedford? Such figures make up just a handful of the 'Bold, Brave and Bizarre Bedfordians' that inspired the new *People Gallery* created during the museum's two-year redevelopment.

The gallery is divided into three themes: 'The Old', 'The Famous' and 'The New'. The 'New Bedfordians' display looks particularly interesting as it seeks to tell the stories of modern day people currently living in Bedford who have made some impact on their town. Going forward, the Higgins is looking for ways to measure the public's response to the New Bedfordians display and in expanding its modern history collection to reflect the region's changing society and cultural diversity. I look forward to seeing how they go about achieving those aims and to visiting what looks to be a beautifully redesigned museum.

Things took a lively musical turn when Robbie Hannan from the UFTM gave his talk 'From Ballymote to Brooklyn', featuring several early recordings of



Robbie Hannan
Image courtesy of Michael Terwey

traditional Irish music. Hannan's talk told the satisfyingly circular story of how Irish music travelled across the Atlantic with nineteenth century emigrants to the United States, and then back to Ireland again. Robbie explained that in the US many Irish musicians, exposed to fresh musical influences and wider audiences, started to enjoy greater popularity than they'd ever had in their native country. Eventually, with the advent of studio recording, new forms of 'traditional' Irish music, influenced by American sounds, found their way back to newly appreciative listeners in Ireland, as well as to many other parts of the globe. The effects of this musical diaspora are still with us - as one delegate pointed out, the best traditional Irish band he'd ever heard was in a pub in Romania!

It was at this stage that we were treated to some excellent live Irish music performed by musicians Ciarán Kelly and Maurice Bradley. This led to plenty of toe-tapping and chair-dancing as delegates enjoyed both a lovely lunch and a genuinely terrific atmosphere.

In the afternoon, I opted for a tour of some of the historic buildings of the UFTM site, led by Linda Ballard, Curator of Folk Life. During the tour we visited

two eighteenth century churches – the Protestant Kilmore Church (“amusingly named for a church!”) as well as the Catholic Church of St. John the Baptist, both of which were transported from their original locations and rebuilt brick by brick. Religion remains a sensitive issue in Northern Ireland and, as Linda explained, there are some people in the region who have been raised with an almost “superstitious” fear of entering a church belonging to another faith. The two church sites at the UFTM therefore have the potential to go beyond giving an insight into the social history of the period, to actually helping to demystify the two communities in Northern Ireland.

After the tour I took part in a discussion led by Steph Mastoris, Head of the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea, on what museums can do to survive the on-going swathes of budget cuts. There were some frank and sobering comments, and it was clear that no one in attendance had avoided being affected by budget cuts in some way. What was also clear, however, was the group's determination to make it through this difficult period and to provide support to each other as much as possible.

The final talk of the conference was given by Zelda Baveystock. Zelda is a Trustee of The

Migration Museum project, a fascinating project that aims to found a museum dedicated to the issue of migration in and around Britain. Zelda began her talk by addressing the question that was no doubt in many delegates' heads at that moment: “Why now?” - why work on creating a new museum when the ones we already have are struggling to survive the recession? In answer to that, Zelda presented some frightening statistics that show that UK attitudes towards immigrants are more negative now than they were ten years ago, especially amongst young people. One of the aims of the Migration Museum would be to help influence these attitudes for the better, and to “contribute to a more reasoned public debate” over immigration.

If the project is successful, the Migration Museum would be the first of its kind in the UK. It would also be unique in that the museum would travel around the country in mobile shipping containers, therefore being able to reach as wide an audience as possible. It is an exciting idea that I sincerely hope is realised. However, as someone who isn't based on 'mainland' Britain, I do have to wonder if it will be feasible for this mobile museum to cross the water to Northern Ireland? If so, I would love to pay a visit.

Overall, this year's conference was a very enjoyable and informative event that offered some fascinating insights into the varied and interesting ways museums with social history collections are stepping up to the challenges of presenting local histories in a global context. It was a genuine pleasure to attend and I would like to thank SHCG and the Northern Ireland Regional Curators Group for enabling me to take part.



Costumed interpreters at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum's Picture House, where silent films are screened.

Image courtesy of NMNI

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A Little Gay History: Desire and Diversity across the World by R.B. Parkinson, British Museum Press, £9.99

A Little Gay History focuses on a selection of forty objects from the British Museum's collection and explores them chronologically. Although compact in format the book is global in scope, including objects from each of the Museum's curatorial departments.

An introductory essay highlights the challenges of compiling a history like this from the Museum's vast holdings. The problems of labels and terminology are addressed, and the difficulty of working with historical records that have assumed exclusively heterosexual behaviour as the norm. *A Little Gay History* is ultimately the culmination of research which began when the author was commissioned to write a trail for the Untold London website by Kate Smith in 2007.

Same-sex relationships have until recently been excluded from museum displays, and this book makes an important contribution to addressing that legacy. The British Museum's acquisition of the Warren Cup in 1999 can be seen in many ways as reflecting an important shift in attitudes. This small Roman silver drinking vessel, decorated with two scenes of male-male lovemaking, is the type of object that would have once been kept in the British Museum's 'Museum Secretum'. However, on acquisition the cup was immediately placed on display in Room 70, only leaving this location to be exhibited in temporary shows around the UK. The cup's inclusion in the BBC Radio 4 series *A History of the World in 100 Objects* brought the object to an even wider audience. Unsurprisingly, the Warren Cup is one of the forty objects included in Parkinson's book.

A number of the other objects



The Warren Cup.
© Trustees of the British Museum

represent Greek and Roman subjects that will perhaps be reasonably well-known, such as the abduction of the beautiful youth Ganymede by Jupiter, or the relationship between the emperor Hadrian and his lover Antinous. However many of the objects touch on histories and cultures that are much less familiar. An eighteenth century 'treasure box' from New Zealand, for example, with 14 stylised figures in types of sexual union, accompanies a discussion about same-sex practices between men in the eastern Pacific.

The book also poses thoughtful questions. An ancient Egyptian funerary stela, for example, records the names of two male officials, Hor and Suty. It has been deliberately damaged leading to speculation that their images were erased by outraged wives or children. Whilst Parkinson feels the more likely explanation is that the men were twins rather than lovers, he refers to literary sources which demonstrate that male couples are a possibility.

To cover such a challenging

range of cultures, time periods and issues the author has drawn on the advice and expertise of specialist curators, but the text and approach is characterised by a distinctive personal style. Inevitably, given the historical record, the majority of the objects reflect the experience of men and the male perspective. With such a broad scope, appealing format and stimulating approach some readers will finish the book wishing that it had been a little longer. As it is, written in accessible terms for a wide and general audience, the book serves to remind us that, as the author states, "love, desire and gender are never minority concerns".

Find out more:

www.britishmuseum.org/explore/themes/same-sex_desire_and_gender.aspx

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Illustrated Envelopes & Curious Addresses

The focus of this article is a type of object that is very familiar to us but might not initially seem that interesting: the humble envelope. Many social history collections contain types of cards and letters but rarely do we stop to consider what they came in, let alone what that container could tell us about the way people lived and thought about their lives.

In the early nineteenth century the postal system was a complicated one, with the postage paid by the receiver, rather than the sender, and the price based on how many sheets the letter contained, as well as how far it had travelled. A letter sent in a wrapper - or envelope as we now know them - would have been charged at a higher rate and, as such, they were often considered an unnecessary extravagance. Instead, letters were more commonly just folded and sealed with wax.

However, in 1840 the Uniform Penny Post was introduced. This revolutionised the way letters were sent with the sender paying the postage, the price of which was now one penny for any letter weighing up to half an ounce. This, combined with

the increased privacy envelopes offered, meant that by 1855 around 93 per cent of domestic letters were sent in envelopes.

Whilst the purpose of an envelope is as a container for the communication within, as with many aspects of letter writing it soon developed into something of an art form. Envelopes started appearing with decorated edges, and then with an array of pictures. Subjects included landscapes, family scenes and caricatures, and some were even adapted as a useful medium for propaganda, particularly to put forward patriotic themes during the Crimean War. Pictorial writing paper also proved successful, and was widely available in towns and cities by the 1850s.

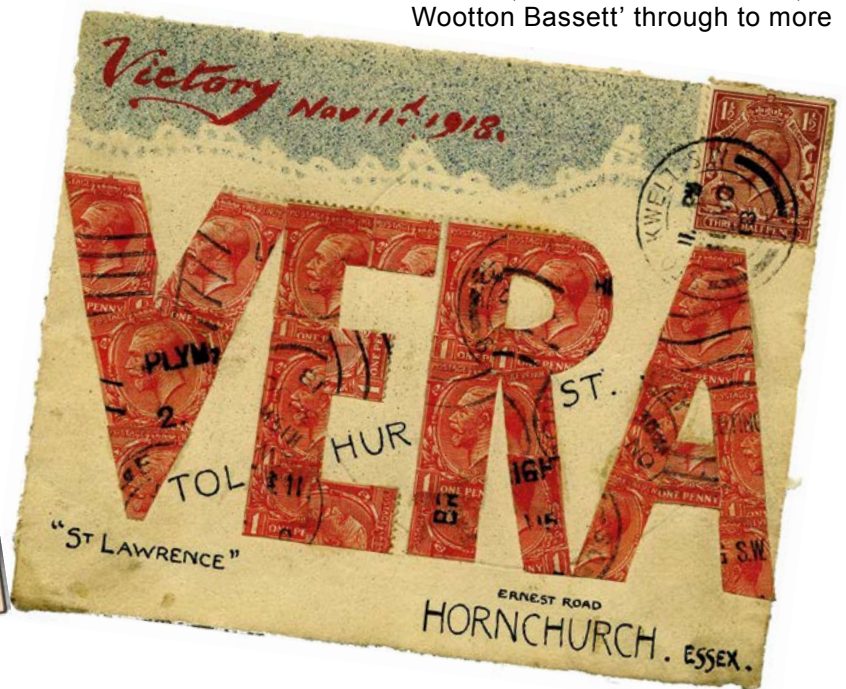
As such, illustrated envelopes can be fascinating social history objects in their own right, particularly as more and more sectors of society were writing

and sending letters, not just the rich and privileged. Moreover, people were embracing this new form of communication and the opportunities for expression that it afforded. One woman at the time summed it up nicely: "It was considered amusing to be able to write to one's friends using an envelope decorated or embellished by a design in one's own handwriting".

Some people took this theme even further, incorporating the address within the picture, rather than writing it out, to create what are known as Curious Addresses which, understandably, tested the knowledge of the postal staff to the full! The British Postal Museum and Archive (BPMA) have a few collections of these Curious Addresses, which range from simple pictures through to more complicated puzzles and rhymes. One of these groups is by a G.H. Mower and they range from simply the name and basic address, such as 'Watts Junior, Wootton Bassett' through to more



Curious Address using a Rebus design: 'Captain Pearce, 11 Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith, W1'.



Illustrated Envelope sent to Vera Tolhurst on 11 November 1918, marking the Armistice.

complicated designs where the words are scattered amongst the image. The image shown on page 20 at bottom left uses a popular Victorian device known as a Rebus, whereby you use pictures to denote words or part of words: here it translates as 'Captain Pearce, 11 Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith W1'. Some also employed rhymes to describe the address; one from BPMA's collection reads:

*"Now Postman take this letter and
don't be peeking in.
It's for Mr Stafford the boss of
Hatherley Inn.
It's near Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire and he always
has for sale,
Ginger pop and Lollipops and
some jolly good old ale"*

Another interesting group is a set of illustrated envelopes sent to various members of the Tolhurst family and spanning about 20 years, showing quite a development within that time. Some show landscapes presumably, although not necessarily, of a view either near to the sender or receiver, whilst others are slightly more unusual, stylised drawings where the address is incorporated into the picture, whether that is on an artist's palette or the back of a tortoise!

Many of these envelopes are postmarked during the Great War, 1914–1918, and the subject matter of the drawings certainly changed to reflect this as you can see above, right. The example at top, dated 23 September 1914, portrays a positive image and one of unity as the troops head off to war with all the flags flying behind them. However, even by December of 1914 the subject is much gloomier, with the dark colours and the Zeppelin airship hovering in the sky above, reflecting certainly the mood and opinion of the writer and perhaps hinting at a wider change in public opinion. The bottom right image is from 1917 and shows St. George slaying the dragon, possibly trying to project some positivity that England might soon have the upper hand in the seemingly never



Images courtesy of BPMA

Set of Illustrated Envelopes from WW1 to the Tolhurst family.

ending war. When war did finally come to an end on 11 November 1918 the accompanying envelope was suitably impressive and is one of my favourite examples (page 20, bottom right). The name 'VERA' is spelled out in stamps and "Victory Nov 11th 1918" is written in red across the top. Through these illustrated envelopes people were not only portraying events both of personal and national importance, but were also expressing their feelings connected with these events and the individuals they were writing to.

Hopefully, through this article, I have shown how even the most ordinary, seemingly unimportant of objects such as the envelope, can help reveal the social history of the past. Whilst there are relatively few books written on the subject of Curious Addresses, the

following offer some interesting background to this aspect of postal history, as well as a more modern take on the same idea.

- Envelopes: A Puzzling Journey through the Royal Mail*, by Harriet Russell
- The Picture Postcard and Its Origins*, by Frank Staff
- Hand Illustrated Postal Envelopes*, by David Swale
- The Mulready Envelope and its Caricature*, by Major E.B. Evans

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Tea Break !

Shortly after the inventions of Daguerre and Fox Talbot became known around 1840, Hill and Adamson in Edinburgh (then, with increasing frequency, other pioneer photographers), set up their cameras in urban streets to capture townscapes. They mainly aimed at recording grand/important buildings, but by chance the occasional small provisions store became included in shot. Minute examination of such photos can yield helpful evidence of the development of shop-front advertising, which emerged as a result of:

- ever increasing literacy
- the development/improvement of mass-production techniques
- transportation/distribution methods, and packaging technology
- advertising becoming indispensable to commerce

All contributed to creating and satisfying a boom in consumer demand for pre-packaged goods. The invention of the enamel advertising sign around 1880 has left hard evidence of who advertised what. That evidence points to tea being advertised widely. Tea was once a luxury enjoyed only by the privileged, but from the 1860s it became accessible to all classes as a result of the spread of plantations and the development of clipper ships. Simultaneously, the Temperance movement discouraged alcohol consumption.

So, from about 1880 tea - a close second to cocoa as the national beverage until after World War I - started to become available pre-packaged (first by Horniman in the late 1870s), as an alternative to being sold loose (and therefore vulnerable to adulteration).

Using surviving enamel advertising signs as evidence, nationwide by World War II there would appear to have been about



Ty-phoo (Chinese for 'doctor') tea was so-named because it was believed to have medicinal qualities, and was widely sold through chemists' shops. There was no 'Mr Black' or 'Mr Green' of Black & Green's tea – but tea itself does come in black and green varieties! Founded in the 1840s, Brooke Bond went into wholesale in the 1880s. At top right, the fragment of a cocoa sign can be identified by the font as Epps's.

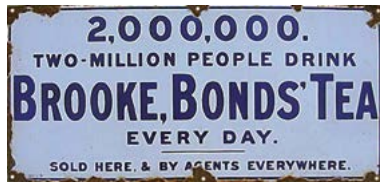
Images Courtesy of Andrew Morley

a dozen cocoa manufacturers vying for business, compared to over 60 independent tea merchants. Other sources suggest that around 1900 there were 60 tea merchants trading in Birmingham alone, but of course only the larger merchants adopted enamel advertising.

Enamelled copper letters were used on traders' shop windows

from the 1870s, first photographed by John Thompson in 1877. They came in white, plain colour and multi-coloured versions, in dozens of fonts and sizes, pre-dating enamelled iron advertising signs by a decade or so.

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